



Promoting *Positive* Mental Wellness in the Classroom

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What We Know From National Research:

Approximately 20% of students *without* disabilities experience mental health needs.

Research on mental health needs of D/HH students is very *limited*.

Prevalence from multiple studies show that approximately 30% of D/HH youth have mental health issues!

2007 Survey of Wisconsin Schools

Almost 25% identified with behaviors indicating mental health challenges.

Of these students, 60% had counseling support as part of their IEP.

Strong interest in professional development on the socio-emotional needs of D/HH youth.

According to D/HH Teachers and PST staff in Wisconsin...

What does a student with positive mental wellness look like?

Clear communication skills
Positive self esteem
Self confidence
Self advocacy
Appropriate social skills

Well-rounded
Strong self identity
Coping skills
Adaptable to all situations
Has a sense of humor

Three key components to *positive* mental wellness

COMMUNICATION

SELF ESTEEM

SELF IDENTITY



Communication

Students miss out on conversations between others (important social information)

Due to lack of communication, students don't understand the abstract concepts of emotional and interpersonal issues

Students face challenges in building close social relationships with peers, staff and family due to inability to communicate in a common language

Misunderstandings are common

Self Esteem

Students who cannot communicate clearly within their environment experience isolation

Isolation leads to lack of meaningful friendships and relationships

Students do not have a clear understanding of coping skills and problem solving skills

Inability to clearly express their ideas, thoughts and feelings can lead to low self esteem as well as misunderstanding of the world around them

Low self esteem leads to more serious mental health issues, such as depression, eating disorders, behavioral issues, etc.



Self Identity

Students who struggle with self identity tend to be confused as of where they fit in the world.

They have no clear sense of who they are. They try to conform to the environment they are in.

Students who don't understand their hearing loss often feel embarrassed, ashamed and/or humiliated by their "disability."

Lack of a self identity can lead to potential future problems, such as not fitting in, lack of support system, and mental health issues.



What Can We Do in Our Classrooms?

Promote classroom & community *membership*

Infuse knowledge of deafness, sign language and/or hearing loss into curriculum

Rights and responsibilities of the student should be identical to other students in the classroom

Structure the classroom so all students have knowledge, skills and opportunity to interact with each other to promote learning

Support full access to and participation in school and community events

Develop strategies to support direct communication with peers and staff

Provide sign language instruction to student body, school staff

Provide interpreting support

What Can We Do in Our Classrooms?

Creative techniques in the classroom

Journaling

Daily themes focusing on emotions, hearing loss, problem solving, etc.

Drawings/Stories

This can be turned into a classroom activity regarding specific themes

Utilizing books during Language time

Exploring positive Deaf characters in Literature

Exploring various emotions and social scenarios

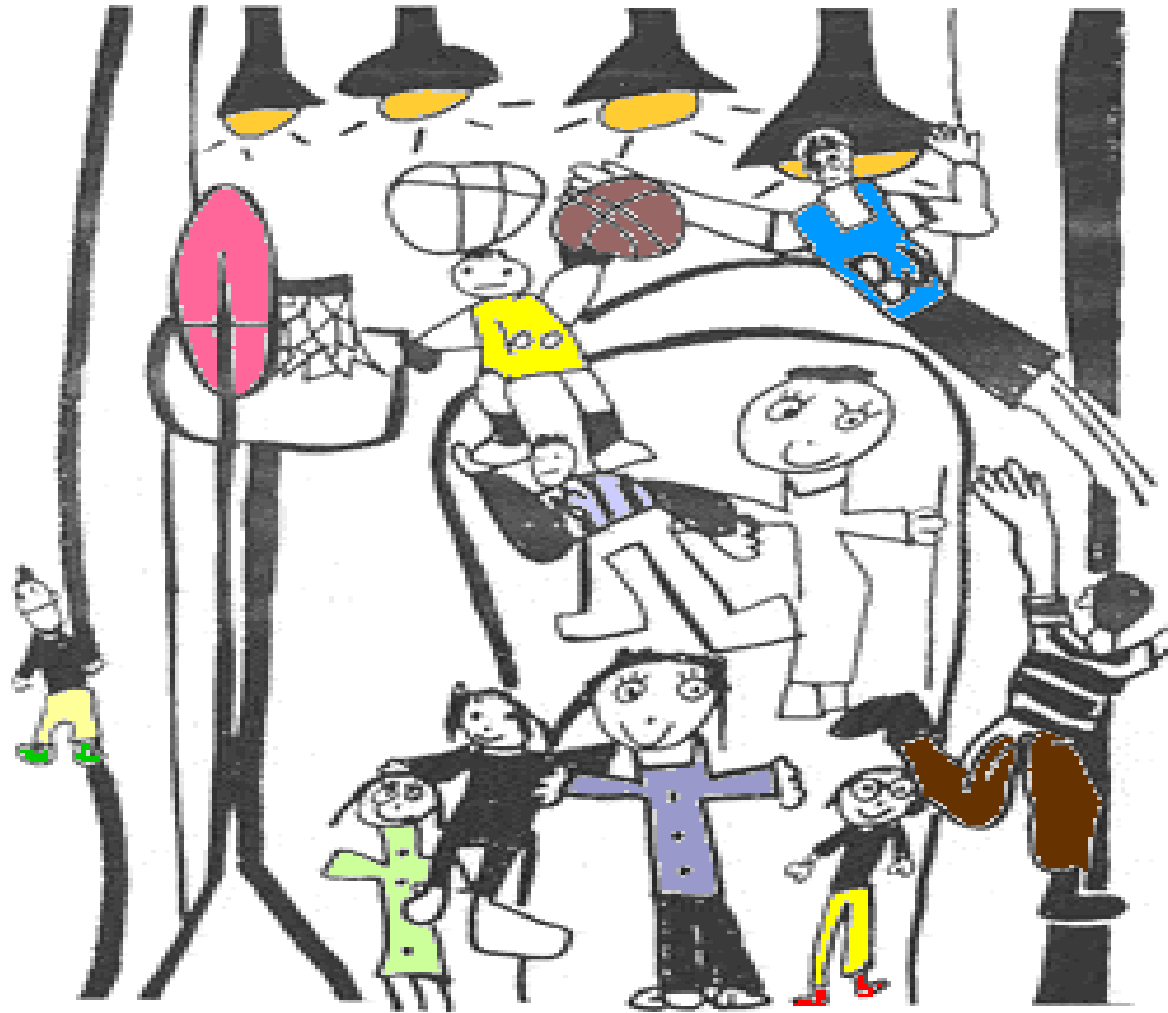
“Community” activities that promote communication, thinking skills and team work

Obstacle courses, treasure hunt, puzzles, games, etc.

Quiet spot in the classroom with special chair



“What me happy? Smile face and flowers.” –Emily, age 4



“I am athletic. I love to play basketball. My friends play with me. That is me.”

- Ethan, a 7th grader



"I love wear pink dress. I deaf girl. My friends sign. Me happy."

-Amanda, a 3rd grader



“I can’t hear the birds or the breeze. That is okay. I can see the birds and butterflies. I can smell the flowers. I can feel the breeze. I don’t have to hear to enjoy being outside.”

-Elizabeth, age 16

Let's Brainstorm!!

What works for YOU in your classroom?

What are some of your struggles with D/HH students?

Any additional questions you may have?